

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OMB-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /117 W

----- 014186

R 031810Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7243

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

LRUESMG/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 0545

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2315

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR HO

SUBJECT: HONDURAN REACTIONS TO CANCELLATION OF JALAPA MEETING

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2245

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE CANCELLATION OF THE JALAPA MEETING OF CENTRAL AMERICAN LEADERS HAS RESULTED IN A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS FROM LEADING INDIVIDUALS AS WELL AS GREAT MEDIA COMMENT. IN GENERAL, THE REACTION HAS BEEN PESSIMISTIC ABOUT A RESOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE AND CRITICAL OF EL SALVADOR'S REFUSAL TO ATTEND THE MEETING. THE SALVADORAN DENUNCIATION OF THE PACT OF BOGOTA, ITS CHARGES AGAINST HONDURAS'S INVOLVEMENT IN BORDER INCIDENTS AND THE REFUSAL TO ATTEND THE MEETING TEND TO MERGE INTO A BELIEF ON THE PART OF MANY HONDURANS THAT EL SALVADOR MAY BE THINKING ABOUT ANOTHER INVASION TO RESOLVE THE PRESENT SITUATION.

END SUMMARY.

1. THE CANCELLATION OF THE JALAPA MEETING OF CENTRAL AMERICAN LEADERS PRODUCED A SPATE OF DECLARATIONS FROM VARIOUS
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HONDURAN PERSONALITIES AND EDITORIAL COMMENT. EX-PRESIDENT CRUZ

STATED THAT HE IS PERSONALLY IN ACCORD WITH PRESIDENT MOLINA'S DECISION NOT TO ATTEND THE JALAPA MEETING BECAUSE THE BOUNDARY QUESTION CANNOT BE RESOLVED BY A MERE PRESIDENTIAL MEETING UNPRECEDDED BY CAREFUL TECHNICAL PREPARATION. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE FAILURE OF SUCH MEETINGS PRODUCES A WORSE SITUATION THAN PRIOR TO THEIR INCEPTION. CRUZ STATED THAT ANY FRONTIER TREATY BETWEEN EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS COULD BE DEVELOPED SOLELY ON A TREATY THAT IS CAREFULLY BASED ON EXISTING DOCUMENTATION AND CONTAINS A CLAUSE COMPELLING ARBITRATION ON MATTERS ON WHICH NEITHER COUNTRY CAN AGREE. EX-FONMIN JORGE FIDEL DURAN STATED THAT HONDURAS' POSITION ON SETTLING THE BORDER DISPUTE HAS REMAINED CONSTANT AND HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY EXPLAINED IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS. HE COMMENTED THAT THE REFUSAL OF PRESIDENT MOLINA TO ATTEND THE JALAPA MEETING IS A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF SALVADORAN ATTEMPTS TO DELAY THE RETURN OF PEACE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HONDURAS WILL CONTINUE ITS POLICY OF ATTEMPTING TO REACH AN AGREEMENT ON THE FRONTIER QUESTION. CARLOS ROBERTO REINA, EX-VICE FONMIN AND PRESENT LEADER OF "DEMOCRATIC LEFT" OF LIBERAL PARTY STATED THAT THE REFUSAL OF EL SALVADOR TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING IS NOTHING MORE THAN A CONTINUATION OF ITS POLICY OF AVOIDING THE PARTICIPATION OF THIRD PARTIES IN RESOLVING THE BORDER DISPUTE. HE SAID THAT SALVADOR'S DENUNCIATION OF THE PACT OF BOGOTA AND ITS REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING WILL FURTHER COMPLICATE THE SITUATION OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND DEMONSTRATES THAT EL SALVADOR IS UNWILLING TO ADHERE TO THE PROCESSES CONTAINED IN INTERNATIONAL LAW. HE REMARKED THAT EL SALVADOR IS FOLLOWING A POLICY OF MAKING THREATS AND OF NOT SEEKING A FRANK DIALOGUE. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE FONMIN CESAR BATRES STATED THAT THE MEETING HAD BEEN POSTPONED IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THE NECESSARY PREPARATORY WORK, AND REMARKED THAT NOTHING CONCRETE HAD BEEN ACHIEVED YET IN REGARD TO PREPARATION FOR A FUTURE MEETING. HE SAID THAT HONDURAS HAD BEEN ACCUSED EARLIER BY EL SALVADOR OF ATTEMPTING TO THWART THE MEETING AND COMMENTED THAT EVENTS PROVED THAT IT WAS EL SALVADOR RATHER THAN HONDURAS THAT WAS GUILTY OF SUCH AN ACTION. HE SAID THAT THE SALVADORAN REFUSAL TO ATTEND THE MEETING DID "NOT NECESSARILY" MEAN THAT THE HONDURAN BORDER IS IN DANGER. HE OBSERVED THAT SO FAR THERE IS NO REASON FOR ALARM IN REGARD TO ANY POSSIBLE WARLIKE ACTION. HE SAID THAT THE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT IS SORRY THAT THE MEETING WAS NOT HELD AND THAT IT WILL CONTINUE ITS SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION.

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2. AS REPORTED IN REFTTEL GENERAL LOPEZ EXPRESSED HIS GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE COLLAPSE OF THE TALKS AND FEARED THAT THE DELAY WOULD ACTUALLY BE INDEFINITE BECAUSE OF THE SALVADORAN POSITION DEMANDING A REOPENING OF THE ENTIRE BORDER DEMARCATION ISSUE. IN A PRESS INTERVIEW ON MAY 31, LOPEZ SAID THAT HE IS PREPARED TO GO "TO CHINA OR THE SUDAN OR ANY OTHER PLACE" TO SETTLE THE SALVADOR-HONDURAS CONTROVERSY OR THE PROBLEMS OF THE

REGION GENERALLY. HE STATED THAT THE HONDURAN POSITION IS THAT BEFORE A GENERAL TREATY CAN BE SIGNED THE FRONTIER QUESTION MUST BE RESOLVED. HE SPECULATED THAT PRESIDENT MOLINA AND POSSIBLY THE PRESIDENT OF GUATEMALA DECIDED NOT TO ATTEND THE MEETING BECAUSE THEY FEARED THE SITUATION WOULD DETERIORATE IF NO SOLUTION WERE FORTHCOMING FROM THE MEETING.

3. HONDURAN PRESS COMMENT WAS GENERALLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE CANCELLATION OF THE MEETING AND CONDEMNATORY IN REGARD TO EL SALVADOR'S ROLE IN BRINGING IT ABOUT. AS AN EXAMPLE, THE LA PRENSA EDITORIAL OF MAY 31 STATED THAT IF EL SALVADOR IS NOT THINKING ABOUT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE "IT MUST BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING NON-PACIFIC MEANS OF FORCING A SOLUTION." THE EDITORIAL RECOUNTED PAST ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE QUESTION AND WARNED AGAINST IGNORING A DANGEROUS SITUATION.

4. COMMENT: THE CANCELLATION OF THE JALAPA MEETING HAS CAUSED AN APPRECIABLE INCREASE IN DISQUIET IN HONDURAS CONCERNING SALVADORAN INTENTIONS. MANY PEOPLE WERE CONVINCED THAT THE MEETING WOULD COME TO NOTHING, BUT SUPPORTED IT AS A MEANS OF CONTINUING A DIALOGUE. SALVADORAN REFUSAL TO ATTEND THE MEETING HAS TENDED TO SET ALARM BELLS RINGING IN THE MINDS OF HONDURANS WHO REMEMBER EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE 1969 WAR. PUBLIC OFFICIAL REACTION HAS BEEN MODERATE BUT THE REACTIONS OF THE PRESS AND MANY LEADERS OF HONDURAN SOCIETY COULD BE DESCRIBED AS ALARMIST. THE SALVADORAN DENUNCIATION OF THE PACT OF BOGOTA, CHARGES AGAINST HONDURAN INVOLVEMENT IN BORDER INCIDENTS AND REFUSAL TO ATTEND THE MEETING ALL TEND TO MERGE INTO A BELIEF ON THE PART OF MANY HONDURANS THAT SALVADOR MAY BE THINKING OF ANOTHER INVASION TO RESOLVE THE SITUATION. SANCHEZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, PERSONAL OPINION, PRESS COMMENTS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, SUMMIT MEETINGS, BOUNDARY CLAIMS, NEGOTIATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JUN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TEGUCI02315
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740142-0219
From: TEGUCIGALPA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740679/aaaacqfd.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: TEGUCIGALPA 2245
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 SEP 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <13 FEB 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HONDURAN REACTIONS TO CANCELLATION OF JALAPA MEETING
TAGS: PFOR, HO, ES, XK, (LOPEZ ARELLANO, OSWALDO), (CRUZ), (ROBERTO REINA, CARLOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005